

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 SUVA 01355 01 OF 02 050253Z

ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05

H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02

SS-15 ICA-11 AID-05 /096 W

-----109504 050320Z /64

R 020115Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY SUVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7706

INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SUVA 1355

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, NH

SUBJECT: NEW HEBRIDES SUTATION

REF: SUVA 1161 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: LEADERS OF NEW HEBRIDES VANUAAKU PARTY HAVE TOLD AMBASSADOR THAT THEY ARE PRESENTLY CONSIDERING CONFIDENTIAL FRENCH PROPOSAL FOR INDEPENDENCE IN 1980. PARTY PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY GENERAL ARE BOUND FOR NEW YORK AND APPEARANCE BEFORE COMMITTEE OF 24. END SUMMARY.

2. REVEREND WALTER LINI, PRESIDENT, AND B. SOPE, SECRETARY GENERAL, OF NEW HEBRIDES VANUAAKU PARTY CALLED ON AMBASSADOR 1 AUGUST TO DISCUSS POLITICAL SITUATION IN NEW HEBRIDES AND TO OBTAIN VISAS FOR MID-AUGUST APPEARANCE IN NEW YORK AT UN COMMITTEE OF 24 MEETING. UPDATE OF SITUATION REPORTED REFTEL IS THAT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BEGAN JULY 18

TO CONSIDER 37 RECOMMENDATIONS OF SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON REFORM OF THE ELECTORAL LAW. ALTHOUGH MOST OF RECOMMENDATIONS WERE APPROVED, ASSEMBLY DECIDED THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 SUVA 01355 01 OF 02 050253Z

A DEMOGRAPHIC CENSUS BY TAKEN ALONG WITH AN ELECTROAL CENSUS (REGISTRATION) BEFORE NEW ELECTIONS COULD BE HELD. THEREBY SIDESTEPPING VAUAAKU DEMANDS FOR EARLY NEW ELECTIONS. LINI SAID VANUAAKU FOUND THIS UNACCEPTABLE AND VIEWED IT AS A DELAYING TACTIC TO KEEP THE FRENCH-BACKED, MINORITY GOVERNMENT IN POWER. PROPOSAL SUBSEQUENTLY MADE IN CONFIDENCE TO VANUAAKU BY FRANCE'S NEW

RESIDENT COMMISSIONER ROBERT HAD, HOWEVER, ALTERED THE SITUATION.

3. ACCORDING TO LINI, COMMISSIONER ROBERT PROPOSED IN A MEETING WEEK OF 25 JULY THE FOLLOWING STEPS BY TAKEN TOWARD INDEPENDENCE:

- A. PRESENT GOVERNMENT AND ASSEMBLY WOULD BE DISSOLVED.
- B. CARETAKER GOVERNMENT WITH FOUR MINISTERS FROM VANUAAKU, FOUR FROM OTHER PARTIES AND A "NAUTRAL" CHIEF MINISTER WOULD THEN BE APPOINTED.
- C. DEMOGRAPHIC CENSUS AND ELECTORAL CENSUS WOULD BEGIN WORK BY 15 SEPTEMBER 1978.
- D. CONSTITUTION DRAFTING COMMITTEE WOULD BEGIN WORK AND PRESENT DRAFT CONSTITUTION FOR REFERENDUM TO THE POPULATION BY AUGUST 1979.
- E. ASSUMING CONSTITUTION ACCEPTED, ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD NOVEMBER 1979 AND NEW GOVERNMENT FORMED.
- F. INDEPENDENCE WOULD BE PROCLAIMED EARLY IN 1980.

4. LINI SAID VANUAAKU HAD BEEN SO SURPRISED BY PROPOSAL AND COMPLETE CHANGE IN FRENCH ATTITUDE, THE PARTY'S IMMEDIATE REACTION HAD BEEN SOMEWHAT MISTRUSTFUL OF FRENCH SINCERITY (A CASE OF TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE). SUBSEQUENT CONSIDERATION AND CONVERSATION WITH BRITISH RESIDENT COMMISSIONER PLUS FRENCH DECISION TO SEND MINISTER FOR OVERSEAS TERRITORIES DIJOU TO NEW HEBRIDES  
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 SUVA 01355 01 OF 02 050253Z

FOR DISCUSSIONS ON AUGUST 11 HAD ALL CONTRIBUTED TO PRESENT VANUAAKU ATTITUDE THAT FRENCH MAY, IN FACT, BE SINCERE IN SEEKING TO ACCELERATE PROCESS OF INDEPENDENCE. LINI SAID OTHER MEMBERS OF PARTY'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WOULD CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS WITH COMMISSIONER ROBERT IN ATTEMPT TO CLARIFY TIME-FRAME FOR DEMOGRAPHIC CENSUS (THEY ARE STILL CONCERNED THAT FRENCH MIGHT USE CENSUS AS DELAYING TACTIC IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN PRO-FRENCH POLITICAL SUPPORT AND TO CONFIRM THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF PROPOSAL.

5. LINI NOTED THAT FRENCH HAD NOT YET ADVANCED PROPOSAL TO NEW HEBRIDES GOVERNMENT, AND HE ASKED THAT INFORMATION BE HELD IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE. COMMISSIONER ROBERT HAD GIVEN VANUAAKU IMPRESSION THAT GOVERNMENT

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PAGE 01 SUVA 01355 02 OF 02 050252Z  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SUVA 1355

WOULD BE ASKED TO STEP DOWN, BUT IF THEY RESITED,  
GOVERNMENT WOULD BE DISSOLVED BY DECREE SIGNED BY THE  
TWO COMMISSIONERS. LINI SAID THAT GOVERNMENT WAS SENDING  
TWO ASSEMBLY MEMBERS TO COMMITTEE OF 24, "BECAUSE THEY  
KNOW WE ARE ATTENDING".

6. BECAUSE OF RAPIDLY DEVELOPING EVENTS, LINI AND SOPE  
HAD CONSIDERED CANCELLING TRIP TO NEW YORK, BUT HAD  
DECIDED TO LET PARTY VICE PRESIDENT KALOKA AND OTHERS  
IN THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS WITH  
FRENCH AND RECEIVE DIJOU AS MEANS OF CONFIRMING TRUST  
PLACED BY LINI IN OTHERS AMONG PARTY LEADERSHIP AND LINI'S  
DESIRE THAT FRENCH REALIZE HIS IS NOT A ONE-MAN SHOW.  
LINI SAID HE WILL KEEP IN CLOSE COMMUNICATION THROUGH  
FRENCH MISSION IN NEW YORK WITH DEVELOPMENTS WHICH MAY  
AFFECT THEIR PRESENTATION TO COMMITTEE OF 24. LINI ALSO  
SAID HE WILL STOP IN PARIS TO SEE DIJOU ON HIS WAY BACK  
TO NEW HEBRIDES. LINI'S PROGRAM IN NEW YORK IS BEING  
ARRANGED BY FIJI MISSION TO UN, AND HE HAD REQUESTED THAT  
THEY SEEK APPOINTMENT WITH AMBASSADOR YOUNG.

7. ASKED ABOUT PARTY'S RELATIONS WITH BRIAN JEFFORD,  
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PAGE 02 SUVA 01355 02 OF 02 050252Z

LINI SAID THAT JEFFORD WAS A NEW  
ZEALAND BUSINESSMAN RESIDENT IN AUCKLAND (WHERE LINI  
WENT TO SCHOOL. WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY LIVED FOR 15 YEARS  
IN NEW HEBRIDES AND FOR PAST TWO YEARS HAD BEEN

ASSOCIATED WITH PARTY AS THEIR INFORMAL REPRESENTATIVE IN NEW ZEALAND. JEFFORD'S APPROACH TO AMERICAN CONSUL GENERAL IN AUCKLAND HAD BEEN AT PARTY BIDDING, AND HIS REQUEST FOR U.S. AID HAD BEEN GENUINE. ONLY MISREPRESENTATION JEFFORD HAD MADE IN CONVERSATION WITH CONSUL GENERAL WAS TO SAY THAT THE PEOPLE'S PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT (PPG) CONTINUED TO EXIST; VANUAAKU HAD DISBANDED PPG AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED. (REFTEL)

8. AMBASSADOR EXPLAINED THAT USG IS NOT ABLE TO ENTERTAIN REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER THAN RECOGNIZED GOVERNMENTS. (LINI'S REQUEST INCLUDED U.S. COAST GUARD ASSISTANCE IN SETTING UP A SYSTEM TO POLICE A 200 MILE ECONOMIC ZONE). OTHER ISLANDS IN THE PACIFIC WERE ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT FISHING RIGHTS, AND PROPOSAL FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL FISHERIES AGENCY WAS SOMETHING VANUAAKU MIGHT FIND OF INTEREST. U.S. CONCERN WAS THAT NEW HEBRIDES POLITICAL SITUATION EVOLVE PEACEFULLY AND WITHOUT WASTE OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND THAT THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE BE CARRIED OUT TO REPRESENTATIVE SELF GOVERNMENT. FROM ALL APPEARANCES, FRENCH PROPOSAL SHOULD BE TAKEN AT FACE VALUE AND THEREFORE BE GIVEN SERIOUS CONSIDERATION AS MEANS TO ACQUIRE INDEPENDENCE IN AN ORDERLY FASHION.

9. COMMENT: LINI AND SOPE ARE BOTH INTELLIGENT AND FORTHCOMING MEN WHO SEEMED RECEPTIVE TO SUGGESTIONS AND THOUGHTFUL IN THEIR CONSIDERATION OF THE BEST MEANS FOR NEW HEBRIDES TO GAIN ITS INDEPENDENCE. WHILE SOME OF THEIR PAST PRONOUNCEMENTS HAVE SUGGESTED THAT THEY HAVE

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PAGE 03 SUVA 01355 02 OF 02 050252Z

CONSIDERED VIOLENCE AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO PEACEFUL ACCESSION TO SELF-GOVERNMENT, FRENCH PROPOSAL APPEARS TO MEET THEIR DEMANDS AS REASONABLE SOLUTION TO DESIRE FOR INDEPENDENCE. FROM ALL REPORTS VANUAAKU IS LIKELY TO BECOME MAJORITY PARTY IF PROPOSED 1979 ELECTIONS TAKE PLACE, AND LINI CAN PROBABLY BE EXPECTED ONE DAY TO ASSUME PRIME MINISTERSHIP. WITH THAT IN MIND, USUN MAY WISH TO EXTEND APPROPRIATE COURTESIES AND CONSIDER ALLOWING HIM OPPORTUNITY OF MEETING AMBASSADOR YOUNG. WE SUGGESTED THEY GET IN TOUCH WITH JOHN WILLETT OF USUN DURING THEIR STAY IN NEW YORK.

10. EMBASSY IS ALSO REQUESTING ICA FACILITATIVE ASSISTANCE FOR LINI AND SOPE TO OBSERVE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS WHILE THEY ARE IN U.S. WITH HOPE THAT PROGRAM WILL SERVE TO KEEP THEM SUFFICIENTLY OCCUPIED SO AS TO AVOID THEIR BECOMING PREY TO SOME OF THE COMMITTEE OF 24'S DISRUPTIVE ELEMENTS.

STILLMAN

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## Message Attributes

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